

**Testimony Concerning HB5344**

**Judiciary Committee, February 24, 2016**

**Kristine Bechard**

**Producer, A Dog Named Gucci**

I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB5344 AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR ANIMALS THAT ARE NEGLECTED OR TREATED CRUELLY. I am a registered voter in Hamden and a citizen with a deep concern for the staggering number of animal abuse cases that abound not only nationwide but also right here in our Connecticut backyards.

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

This quote (attributed to the esteemed Mahatma Gandhi) still resonates with me as it did when I began my letter to you in April of 2013. My feelings about helping the smaller, the weaker, the hopeless, the voiceless and the less fortunate have not waivered. In fact, they have only gotten stronger. Incensed by the sentence handed down to the abuser of Desmond, the former shelter dog who was abused, strangled, then unceremoniously thrown into a lake, and haunted by the many other stories of neglect and cruelty, I set out on a mission. My mission was to find out what I could do to help enact change. What I did was work to create a film that showcases what each of us can do as individuals and what collectively we can accomplish together. I pledged to do something about animal cruelty and I am now asking you to do the same.

A quick search for Connecticut animal cruelty cases reveals many. There is of course Desmond of New Haven. But there are others: Princess of Hamden, Cash and Puppy Dora of Bridgeport, Bella of Chaplin. There are reported cases in Bristol, Shelton, Mystic, Waterford, Enfield, New Britain, Waterbury and more. It happens everywhere. And with mounting evidence to support this, we know that violence towards animals is strongly linked to violence towards people. As a mom to two rescue dogs, the prevalence of animal abuse cases has led me to actively support this bill. We need advocates who can step up, speak up, and do something, for those who cannot.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify. I hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.